1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

(1) ANCESTOR WORSHIP

It is characteristic of the Min Chia attitude to religious practices that, although the Shu Pao ceremony is a rite of Ancestor Worship, it has become associated with other deities as well. On the day following the ceremony many people, particularly women, go to the temple of Tung Yueh, the Taoist King of the Underworld, and there offer prayers and burn incense for the repose of the spirits of the dead, with the same ritual as is used in the spring festival of this deity. The difficulty of reconciling the belief that the ancestral spirits have just been dwelling in the home, and the belief that they, or some of them, have been confined in the Taoist underworld until released by these sacrifices, does not appear to trouble the Min Chia mind. This is by no means the only instance in which conflicting theology is ignored in favour of the performance of differing rites serving the same general purpose.

Also connected with the Shu Pao ceremony is the custom of releasing K'un Ming "lamps", in reality fire balloons ingeniously made of paper and bamboo lathes, which rise burning to great heights on still windless evenings, such as are common at this season of the year. These fire balloons take their name from the famous Chinese general of the third century A.D., Ch'u-k'o Liang, or Ch'u-k'o K'un-Ming, who first temporarily conquered Yunnan for the Western Han Dynasty. Legend relates that he used this device to send signals to detached bodies of his troops in his wars with the native princes of Yunnan. Although this is the explanation commonly given for the name of the fire balloons, it is admitted that they are never used till the night of the 14th of the 7th Month, the night of the Shu Pao ceremony, and subsequent nights for about a month. In spite of this rather faint connection with religion, no one is able to explain what function, other than that of entertainment, the release of these fire balloons is meant to fulfil. Releasing

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

(2) THE GODS

The festivals of these deities are in fact in every way similar to that of Kuan Yin. At the festival of Tung Yueh, the Taoist King of the Underworld, there are some slight variations. In front of the main shrine of this temple there is a large water tank crossed by a low bridge of stone. Here curious rites are performed intended to assist the dead to escape from hell. Little cheap pottery bowls with a lighted candle stuck in them are launched on the waters of the tank, and the worshipper endeavours to steer the bowl under the bridge into the other part of the tank, and so to the further side of it. If this is successfully performed it is believed to be an omen that the soul of the deceased person has escaped from hell. At the same time little ladders made of bamboo, the size of toys, are lowered end on into the water, also with the intention of helping the dead to escape from the underworld. It is not easy to steer the bowls with their candles still alight to safety, for the worshipper must not touch the bowls, only being allowed to swish the water about with a stick and so create currents which waft the bowl through the narrow opening of the bridge. Consequently the surface of the water is soon strewn with candle ends and the bottom of the tank with sunken bowls.

It might be supposed that these evil omens would have a depressing affect on the crowd and the unsuccessful worshippers, but in fact the whole performance seems to be more in the nature of a game than a religious rite. The theoretically solemn business of liberating a soul from torment is left to the unskilful hands of small children, or the too vigorous splashings of schoolboys, while an irreverent crowd of their playmates cheers a success or laughs derisively at a failure. Young men can be heard laying odds on one bowl or against another, a striking instance of the gambling spirit intruding into what was once, perhaps, a truly religious rite.

A: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

person is not at peace about some matter, and if the manifestations continued the geomancers would be called upon to re-orientate the grave.

In common with many other peoples the Min Chia believe that dogs can see ghosts at all times, and the howling of a dog is taken as a sure indication that ghosts are about. It is also believed that cross-eyed people can see ghosts, though whether those afflicted in this way substantiate this opinion I cannot say, as I never had an opportunity to talk to a cross-eyed Min Chia. If a ghost is seen in a public place, such as a street, the residents subscribe to maintain a street shrine with chanting of sutras and music for a day or two, as it is considered unlucky and ill-omened. In 1938 the ghost of a certain old woman, who had been the gate keeper of the Protestant Mission and who had died suddenly, was seen in broad daylight not far from the Mission, or so at least it was alleged. The residents of that part of the main street of Ta Li where the ghost was seen then set up a street shrine, to the considerable inconvenience of wayfarers and muleteers passing through the town.

The Min Chia also believe in possession by evil spirits, or more strictly, by malign ghosts. There is a standard rite for exorcising such ghosts, and though I was never able to witness this, it was described to me by a Min Chia who had seen it performed. A miniature suit of clothes, coat and trousers, is made from coloured paper, and brought into the room where the possessed person is confined. The doors are then shut, and fresh peaches thrown about the room in all directions, whereupon the paper suit is thrown out of the window, and promptly burned by persons waiting outside for this purpose. The rite is performed by a member of the family, no outside person, priest or Sai Dser being called in. It was explained that the act of throwing peaches about drove the ghost to take refuge in the paper suit, and thus

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

enabled it to be cast out bodily and rendered harmless. The peach in China and the Far East generally is a fairy fruit, and charms are made of peach wood or peach stones. It is also an ancient belief in China that peach wood is a defence against evil spirits. The modern "gate gods" are simply pictures pasted on the gate to keep out demons, but they were originally painted on peach wood boards hung upon the gate.

The Min Chia also believe in poltergeists, a belief shared by their Yunnanese neighbours of all tribes. During the time I was in Ta Li I was not able to hear of a local poltergeist, although I was told that some years before one had been active in a certain village not far from the city. But in 1937 the city of Li Chiang, just beyond the Min Chia country to the north, was the scene of poltergeist manifestations which attained a considerable local celebrity. The home of a rich family of merchants of that city was almost entirely ruined by these long continued destructive attacks. The family, forced to abandon the house in which mysterious fires would break out in unlikely places, or stones coming flying through the air, left a few faithful members to guard against robbers and attempt to detect the "ghost" in the act, if it should prove to be after all a human enemy. The priests of all local religions, Lama Buddhists, Taoists and others, were invited in to exorcise the ghost, and altars with their incense and offerings were placed in every room. The manifestations continued for more than eight months, and when I visited the house late in 1937 it was virtually ruinous. Much of the woodwork was burned or charred, even under the eaves and high up on the walls, where the fire can only have been applied by a torch. The doors and window lattices were smashed and scarred by stones, and these lay in heaps in the courtyard. It was said that one fire had broken out the previous night, and we were shown the spot, under the roof ridge, which was indeed charred and still smoking slightly.

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

775

No stones were thrown during my visit to the house, but other European visitors have told me that stones were thrown when they were there. When a Chinese colonel, second-in-command of the Li Chiang garrison, visited the house, and with drawn pistol boastfully defied the ghost, he was struck on the back of the head by a stone and rendered unconscious. I was told that he was surrounded by his body-guards at the time that this occurred.

Not long after I visited the house the haunting ceased. It appears that the family who owned it are responsible for the upkeep of a chain suspension bridge across one of the rivers on the caravan route to Mu Li and Ta Chien Lu in Chinese administered Tibet (Si Kang province). The bridge had fallen into a dangerous condition of disrepair, and mules had been lost in trying to cross it. Yet the family made no attempt to undertake repairs. Early in 1938, at whose suggestion I could not discover, they repaired the bridge, and thereupon the haunting stopped at once.

Min Chia and Chinese were much divided in their opinions about this outcome of the Li Chiang hauntings. Some laughingly suggested that it had all been a clever plan on the part of those who wanted the bridge repaired. Others argued that such a secret could never be kept in the middle of a city, and that the effects produced in a house guarded day and night were far beyond the reach of human skill. Anyone as clever as that they said, could have made a fortune as a thief, and would not need to engage in practical jokes of a dangerous kind for no reward. It was however, agreed that no one hitherto had heard of a poltergeist who worked in such a disinterested way for the public good. The third possibility, that the effects were produced by one of those members of the family who were left on guard, was generally discounted by all for the characteristically Chinese reason that no member of a family would be

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

795 party to actions bringing ruin and loss to his kinsmen. No Min Chia or Chinese attributed the manifestations to the magical operations of an enemy, or to the effects of a curse. Opinion was divided between those who credited a human being with remarkable skill, daring and dexterity, and those who believed in the independent action of a malign spirit. The Min Chia are not, of course, acquainted with psychological theories of dissociation of the personality, and so the possibility that one of the members of the guard could have done these things in such a condition did not enter their calculations.

794 Curiously enough the Min Chia do not share the common Chinese belief in were-foxes, a belief which has deeply coloured Chinese and Japanese legend and fiction. Shapeshifting stories are common in Chinese literature, but do not seem to be known to those Min Chia who could not read Chinese fiction. On the other hand a case of shapeshifting was actually reported on March 18th, 1937. The case created much interest among the Min Chia and all those to whom I spoke declared they had never heard of such a thing before. March 18th was a bright windy day such as are common at that season. Boatmen from the eastern shore who came into the city in the afternoon had a strange tale to tell.

They said that when the boats from Wa Shih, a large village on the eastern shore, were about to start in the morning for the Ta Li side of the lake, a tall handsome man took passage on one boat which had a crew of three men. Half way across the lake the boatmen were horrified to see their passenger turn bright red and transform himself before their eyes into a tiger, which thereupon struck down two of the crew, while the third, diving overboard, escaped by swimming to another boat. When asked what had become of the abandoned boat and the tiger, no one professed to know. In

3: Torrance E-4 (no date) 1933 AE3 Sino-Tibetan Border Peoples AE3

old zeal and fire have insensibly diminished. Even in the present generation we ourselves have watched this decline make definite progress. Old priests from whom we learnt much of what is here given have died off, and their successors, while performing the motions of the ritual, have not shown half the knowledge of its inner meaning their sires did. Their surroundings have not lent them the inspiration they required to maintain the old time brilliancy of their religion.

With regard to the spiritism adopted in some quarters, the young priests are alleged to pass through a trance at their initiation. A spirit then is supposed to possess them, taking complete possession for the time being of their faculties. After this possession is over they are physically limp or half-exhausted until their strength is regained.

On the other hand, it is alleged that this is not always the case. The possession by the spirit is not real but simulated. An old priest instructs them how to feign the usual phenomena so that their reputation should not come behind others in having authority over occult powers.

Such as do have real experience with spirits profess to be able to call up these unseen personalities at will. By ways known to themselves they secure their aid or release from harmful influences. After a death, if the priest be up to his job, the spirit can lead back the departed soul under leash to his old home for a visit in a manner similar to the way shown in street processions of the actors of the Buddhist temple of hell.

In one district the priests carry, hung from their girdles, a bunch of ludicrously weird objects called the *Te-sa-a-ga*. Anything that is curious or strange enough or suggestive may find a place in the collection. Together they make a rare rattle for the ignorant and the gullible. You may see an eagle's bill, a cock's foot, a wild boar's tusk, a goat's horn, a bit of bone, a cymbal, deer's teeth, a Chinese charm cash, or a rare shell. Each object proclaims the exorcist powers of its possessor. With these by his side no one can doubt his ability to recall the soul in sickness, undo demoniac powers and save you in general from the evil eye.

Incidentally they prove a god-send to the sensationalist wiseacre. With these to shake in front of his audience, who dare doubt now that the Chiang are litholatrists, animists and demon worshippers! Seeing is believing? His case is proven. And he struts around as pleased with himself as the man who wears the lot at his belt.

He, however, who knows something of the genius of the beautiful old Chiang religion groans within himself at the sight of such things. How have the best become the worst? The *Te-sa-a-ga*, once pure as the morning light, has fallen from its high estate. We believe we hold the key to its primitive significance but must meanwhile wait before giving its solution. Sufficient here to say

5:Graham E-5 (1933, 1941)1942 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3
Ch'iang

764 Chinese influence is strong. In more remote places cremation is
177 still the most common method.

At Lung Ch'i Chai there is a flat stone near the place of
764 cremation. The coffin is placed on this stone while the relatives perform a funeral dance. Then the coffin is carried to the place of cremation while the priest chants the sacred songs. The relatives weep while the coffin and the corpse are burnt to ashes. A bowl or jar is broken and the fragments are thrown inside. Next morning, after the fire has cooled down, the relatives come and gather the ashes and deposit it in the large tomb near by.

764 At Lung Ch'i Chai there is a common grave which on the
349 outside looks much like a Chinese tomb. On the outside there is one large opening or door, and inside there are two. These doors are never closed. The cremation is done in two wooden sheds near by, which are in a poor state of repair. The ashes of the men and boys are placed on the right—on the left as one faces the outside door from the inside—which is the place of honor, and the ashes of the women and girls are deposited on the left. The ashes of a great many people have been deposited here.

The crematory houses are small roofed buildings about ten feet square. This is set on a stone base that rises about a foot from the ground. The sides are not boarded up, but consist of small upright posts a few inches apart, and large posts on the corners. Before the cremation takes place, eight or more men lift the entire building off its hinges and deposit it at one side. After the cremation it is again set into place. One or more families use the same crematory house, and there are several such houses near each village.

766 A baby is often not formally buried or cremated, but simply covered up in a hole in the ground.

764 Near Ts'a To and Ho P'ing Chai small crematory houses, varying in size according to the financial ability of the family, are sometimes built and burnt with the coffin and the corpse inside. There is a funeral dance, and the priest chants and performs his sacred ceremony.

766 People who die violent and unnatural deaths—women who die
995 in childbirth, and men and women who fall over a cliff, are drowned, are killed by wild animals, are poisoned to death or die by hanging, become demons. These are cremated even in villages where burial in tombs has become common, and the priest performs a ceremony by which he encloses the demon inside a jar, after which it is taken

5:Graham E-5 (1933, 1941)1942 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3
Ch'iang

to a crossroads and the jar is buried upside down. The jar is covered by paper, and priests have told the writer that the paper moves because the demon is jumping about inside. During cremation, in some villages, two wooden birds are placed on the coffin. They are rescued and carried away to the homes of the rescuers.

When a person dies there is present a poisonous breath called *sa ch'i* 煞氣. To offset its effects and to keep away demons a cockerel is sometimes killed and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts.

V. *Religion.*

1. The Future Life.

The Ch'iang have not a very definite idea of the future life. Some say that hades is below and that it is a dark and shadowy place. They have heard the Christian teaching about heaven and hell, and that of the Buddhists and Taoists about hell and Western Paradise. Their idea of the soul does not seem to be very clear. There are few if any memorial customs excepting those that were influenced by the Chinese. They say that they love and revere their ancestors, living and dead. Said one, "If we offer food or burn spirit money, what good does it do? If we offer food or wine, they cannot eat or drink it. Spirit money when burnt turns into smoke." Some believe in reincarnation. Many commemorate their ancestors on the fifth day of the fifth moon or the fifteenth day of the seventh moon. Some worship their ancestors in their homes on the first, fifteenth, and thirtieth of each lunar month.

2. The World View.

These people live on the sides and tops of high mountains, or in narrow valleys. The climate is cool and comparatively dry. Near them live the powerful Jia Rung, the Wa Ssu, the Hei Fan, and the fierce Heh Shui, Luh Hua, and Bolotzu. Wild animals live in the forests and attack human beings, the crops, and the domestic animals. There are floods and droughts. People fall over the cliffs or drown in the streams. Lightning strikes trees and houses, and sometimes kills people or animals. Earthquakes shake down houses, rolling stones kill or injure people, and pestilences sweep the country killing men and domestic animals. The Ch'iang are not

Mewu

corner of the /48/ tent, which is the home of Yu-la. The fur of all kinds of domestic animals is used, and a tuft of hair is plucked out of each animal for this purpose before it is sold or slaughtered. Thus the bundle constantly increases in size. After a meal, tea, butter, and milk are smeared on the bundle of hair for the house god.

On the altar which is found in every tent stand small statues made of bronze or brass of the Lamaistic deities. The god that seems to be most popular here is called Dzam-la. He corresponds, allegedly, to Ts'ai-shen, the god of wealth (2) of the Chinese popular re-

2. Compare Wadell, page 370.

ligion; in accordance with Lamaistic custom, water is regularly offered to this god. Another god much venerated is one that is thought of as dwelling in hell and judging the souls of the dead. He corresponds to the Chinese Yen-lo-wang. The "horse god" (Chinese: Ma-wang-yeh, Tibetan: dam-dzen) who is also worshiped in the Lamaistic temples is offered sacrifices by the sorcerers, especially when there is threat of war. He has three heads and is represented in union with its Cakti (female principle). Ts'ai-shen and Chia-shen are worshiped by men and women alike.

I did not learn anything about a worship of the heavens among the Fantzu, nor of the sun, moon and stars.

After death the soul of the deceased can turn into an evil spirit. It can descend into hell (Tibetan: nal-wa), where it is adjudicated by the judge of hell (Yen-lo-wang, Yama). But just as in China, there is a parallel belief in Buddhistic transmigration of souls, and no one is aware of any inconsistency. If a person has led a good life, he can be reborn as an incarnation (fu-yeh), if he has been bad, he becomes a woman or an animal (bovine, horse, ox, sheep). Here the belief in the transmigration of souls is sometimes confused with the belief in evil spirits into which the souls of persons who have died a violent death are transformed.

/49/ A characteristic incident had just occurred among the Mewu-Fantzu:

The t'ou-mu of the Mewu-Fantzu had a younger brother with whom he had quarreled seven or eight years before about the rule of a group of Fantzu. He had had the brother treacherously killed one day when the latter was riding across the steppes. A short time afterwards, groundhogs dug a passage behind the t'ou-mu's house with an opening inside the enclosure of his property. This was a surprising

682 and unusual thing, considering the shy nature of groundhogs. The
775 chief immediately feared that his brother might be among these groundhogs, and proclaimed a general law against groundhog hunting. This law was still enforced, although the sale of groundhog pelts brings in quite a bit of money. It probably means that the Fantzu shared or at least understood the fear of their chieftain. On the other hand, according to primitive ideas of justice, the assassination was in no way avenged, since this would have been exclusively a matter that concerned the family of the victim.

769 Ancestor worship is different from that of the Chinese. There are no ancestral tablets. In the Mewu-Fantzu dialect the ancestors are called xŏŭ. After the father or mother has died, he or she is venerated by daily sacrifices in front of the tent. Later this sacrifice is made only on the 1st, 8th, 15th and 29th of the month, and then it is gradually abandoned.

791 Just as Taoist and Buddhist priests take part in exorcism, the propitiation of offended spirits and the casting out of evil ones, so Tibetan sorcerers and lamas are enlisted for this purpose. The sorcerer corresponding to the Taoist (tao-shih) or exorcist (kan-kuei-hsien-sheng) of the Chinese popular religion is called no-hua by the Tibetans and "böm-bu" (local pronunciation) by the Chinese. Thus he is a priest of the Bon religion. He wears his hair /50/ long, and is adorned with a special head scarf. (1) There are no different kinds

1. Compare Hoffmann 9), page 137 (names), page 197 (relations to shamanism).

of böm-bu. Not every tent community has a böm-bu, and unfortunately there was none in the community I visited. The böm-bu is married and his profession - the art of carrying out exorcistic rites and writing incantations to ward off spirits - is handed down from father to son, but not to daughter or son-in-law. The altar in the tent of the böm-bu contains the customary small statues of gods and bowls for the sacrificial water, as well as a large Chinese brush with which he writes his incantations, and a long row of copper coins. He always has prayer books, although the laymen say that many böm-bu cannot read their prayerbooks, but only leaf through them. On the other hand, I was told that the böm-bu are able to understand the sacred writings of the lamas, but that, conversely, fewer educated lamas understand the sacred writings of the böm-bu. In spite of the high esteem in which the lamas are